

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers

### From Our Partners...

#### NHTSA Offers Free Click It or Ticket Signs for Use Indoors or Out

NHTSA has Click It or Ticket signs that are available free of charge to any organization for use indoors or out. The signs are 24" X 28" and are constructed of a laminated paper with a peel-off backing so they can be applied to walls, foam board, metal, etc. The signs cannot be used on commercial vehicles as they do not conform to U.S. DOT regulations for placards. They can be used to support efforts to increase safety belt use among employees and to remind the workforce that a strong law enforcement presence exists across the nation. There is no cost associated with the signs and NHTSA will ship them free of charge. **Please email Barbara Sauers at [bsauers@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:bsauers@nhtsa.dot.gov) to place your order.**

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### Traffic Safety Information...

#### Stressful Commutes Spill Over to the Job

According to a USA Today article, stressful commutes spill over to the job. The more hassled drivers feel by their morning commute, the more verbally abusive they are to co-workers and the more they try to sabotage productive efforts, suggest several studies to be released. The studies come as Americans are spending more time on the road. The average travel time to work in 2000 was 25.5 minutes, an increase of three minutes from a decade earlier, US Bureau of Census figures show. Gridlock also is cited as an obstacle to cities that want to attract businesses. The most aggressive people, both on the road and in the office, may be those who commute in heavy traffic and play no music or listen to relaxation tapes, the type with synthesized sounds or bird songs. It's not distance that drives commuters bonkers; it's mostly congestion, says psychologist David Van Rooy of Florida International University in Miami. He tested drivers' anxiety levels when they had 6-mile or 18-mile commutes in light or heavy traffic. The more congested the road and the longer heavy traffic lasted, the more depressed, anxious and frustrated people got, he says. Anxiety starts at home when drivers know they're about to get on congested roads, he found. "We pay a price for these awful commutes," he says. Stressed drivers often are hurrying, and that's what leads to aggressive road behavior. But the hard-core aggressive driver "will tell you he's not being aggressive; everyone else is driving too slowly," says psychologist Patricia Ellison-Potter of NHTSA.

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#### First Bill to Impose Jail Time for Fatigued Drivers

A new bill has been adopted in New Jersey, believed to be the first of its kind, which imposes jail time and fines on sleep-deprived drivers who cause a fatal crash. "The bottom line of this bill is to educate and promote awareness of how dangerous it is to drive while knowingly fatigued," said Senator Stephen M. Sweeney (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester). **For the full story, visit [http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/governor/njnewsline/view\\_article.pl?id=1324](http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/governor/njnewsline/view_article.pl?id=1324).**

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#### New Study Shows Cell Phones Are Not the Only Distraction While Driving

According to a report released this week by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS), nearly all drivers get distracted sometime while behind the wheel, and the culprits are more than just cell phones. The study cited reaching for something inside the car and fiddling with the audio system as the primary causes of driver distraction. The study was conducted by researchers at the University of North Carolina's Highway Safety Research Center in Chapel Hill, NC, and by Philadelphia traffic research consultants TransAnalytics. The researchers used small windshield-mounted cameras to

videotape 70 volunteers from Chapel Hill and Philadelphia while they were driving their own cars. Results showed that more than 97 percent of the drivers leaned over or reached for something inside the car, while more than 91 percent adjusted the controls of the audio system. More than 75 percent carried on conversations, and more than 71 percent ate or drank while they were behind the wheel.

**For the AAA press release and full study results, visit the AAFTS website at**

**<http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=distractil>.**

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## **New In-Car Technologies Being Developed at Carnegie Mellon**

Researchers at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh are developing a high-tech system to convert drivers' hand gestures into something more useful than impromptu communications with fellow drivers. Make a few jabbing motions in the air, for instance, and you might adjust the car's electronic control system. A "twirl" of an index finger and the radio's volume goes up or down, depending on the direction of the twirl. "Wave" and incoming cell phone calls are automatically answered by a voice-mail system. The "gesture interface" system is one of a few advanced control systems being studied by university scientists for the General Motors Collaboration Laboratory. The goal of the lab, a five-year, \$8 million joint project with the Detroit automaker, is to help develop new technologies to make cars "smarter" and allow drivers to stay focused on the road. **For more information on the Smart Car, visit the Carnegie Mellon website at [http://www.cmu.edu/cmnews/extra/030602\\_smartcar.html](http://www.cmu.edu/cmnews/extra/030602_smartcar.html).**

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## **Rumble Strips are an Effective Safety Tool in Work Zones**

The use of rumble strips in work zones is an effective safety tool that should be continued according to a report produced by the Transportation Research and Development Bureau of the New York State Department of Transportation. **For more information, visit**

**[http://www.dot.state.ny.us/tech\\_serv/trdb/files/sr140.pdf](http://www.dot.state.ny.us/tech_serv/trdb/files/sr140.pdf).**

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## **Guide for Doctors to Aid in the Decision if Elderly Patients are Still Fit to Drive**

The American Medical Association (AMA) is offering a new Internet guide to help doctors decide whether their elderly patients are still fit to drive. The AMA said the guide was conceived and prepared long before two recent serious crashes involving elderly motorists in California and Florida. The guide recommends that doctors ask patients if they have difficulty driving. Doctors are told to be alert for things that might hamper driving ability, such as cataracts, arthritis, strokes and certain medications.

**For a copy of the guide, visit the AMA website at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/10791.html>.**

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## **Traffic Congestion has an Impact on Cost of Having Company Cars**

Britain's company car drivers spend nearly six million working hours a week stuck in congestion, costing business tens of millions of pounds in the process. Such is the state of Britain's road network that on average, a company car driver loses a total of two working weeks to congestion every year, a new report has found. The survey, put together by leasing and fleet management giant LeasePlan, found that the length of time added to company car drivers' journeys each week as a result of congestion now averaged one hour and 55 minutes. But Britain's three million company car drivers are not just the victims of congestion. The average driver spends 11 hours a week commuting to and from work, which is contributing significantly to high traffic levels, and is more than two hours a week more than the European average, LeasePlan claims. According to Kevin McNally, LeasePlan's managing director, "With employees now traveling greater distances by car and spending more time caught in congestion, businesses need to be aware of the added pressure this increasing number of hours spent behind the wheel is putting on their employees."

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## **Beware When Outsourcing the Management of Company Cars**

U.K. fleets outsourcing the management of their company cars in a bid to free up administration time and save money are being warned not to give up total responsibility. Although handing over the running of a fleet to a specialist company can be a sensible move for some fleets, it is imperative that at least one member of staff within the organization play some sort of fleet role, claims Tony Leigh, chairman of the U.K. based Association of Car Fleet Operators (ACFO). Leigh says, "Outsourcing fleet management can be a sensible move for companies and authorities wanting to free up time spent on administration but there is also a word of warning that needs to be issued. "It's important to have someone within the workplace monitoring how the outsourcing company operates and whether it is giving the fleet the best deal. It is also imperative they deal with health and safety and risk management issues, such as monitoring drivers' hours and checking licenses internally within the workplace." But outsourcing done properly can prove financially beneficial.

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## **1 in 3 American Adults Say it is All Right to Exaggerate Insurance Claims**

One in three U.S. adults -- 33 percent -- say that it is all right to exaggerate insurance claims under certain circumstances, according to a recent Insurance Research Council (IRC) survey. These respondents agreed that it is acceptable to increase the amount of an insurance claim by a small amount to make up for a deductible. Just over one in five respondents (22 percent) agreed that it is acceptable to increase the amount of a claim to make up for insurance premiums paid when no claims were made. In contrast, fewer respondents tolerated dishonesty in areas other than insurance, such as exaggerating income or experience in a job interview or withholding information on a loan application or from the IRS. **For further information and a copy of the IRC news releases, visit the IRC website at <http://www.ircweb.org/>.**

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## **Company Making Remote Vehicle Entry Easier**

While many companies are designing complex remote vehicle entry systems that use encrypted codes or voice-activation, Key Plastics has taken a simpler approach. The Farmington Hills, MI-based company's "Intellitouch" essentially replaces traditional mechanical door handles with a sensor embedded in the handle that triggers the door latch. To open the door, the driver presses a button on a key fob to activate the sensor. As the driver approaches, the handle senses the driver's hand, electronically releases the latch and opens the door. Once the driver is inside, the door closes and latches. When the vehicle is in drive, the sensor is automatically disengaged so the doors are always locked when the vehicle is in motion. With no moving handle components, pinched fingers and torn fingernails are a thing of the past. Plus the handles are air- and water-tight, cutting wind noise, rattles and corrosive moisture inside the doors. **For more information, visit the Key Plastics website at [http://www.keyplastics.com/news/June\\_4\\_2003.htm](http://www.keyplastics.com/news/June_4_2003.htm).**

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## **Increasing Blind Spots in Increasingly Larger Vehicles are Causing More "Backover" Incidents**

At least once a week a child in America is run over, typically in driveways or parking lots. According to Consumer Reports, the blind spot behind a tall vehicle such as a Chevrolet Avalanche truck can extend as much as 51 feet in the case of a small-stature driver about 5 feet 1 inches tall. Even for an average-sized driver, 5 feet 8 inches tall, the blind spot can extend nearly 30 feet behind the Avalanche, according to the consumer advice publication. Pointing out statistics showing at least one child a week in the United States is killed in a "backover" incident, Janette Fennell, founder and president of the child safety advocacy group Kids and Cars, urges that some kind of "backover warning and prevention device" be made mandatory on all vehicles. Fennell's group only collects data on children, but she acknowledges adults also can be and are killed and injured in backovers. In fact,

the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated 2,767 people were treated in emergency rooms from July 2000 through June 2001 because of backovers.

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### Pre-Crash Warning Technologies are Being Tested

Car manufacturers are testing new technology to warn drivers before a crash happens. Toyota and Honda have started offering crash-warning devices in some vehicles in Japan. Ford is hoping to roll out the technology in a few years. Honda's special brake system radar in front of the car detects vehicles within 300 feet. If the driver is approaching too quickly, the system pulls on the seat belt and brakes slightly. A buzzer goes off and a small light flashes on the dashboard. Toyota's system is similar except that it isn't activated until the driver steps on the brakes. Ford uses a small camera mounted on top of the rear-view mirror to focus on the car ahead. The video appears on a monitor embedded in the dashboard. If the other car gets too close, the box around the image of the car turns from green to red. The seat belts tighten automatically and a computer voice calls, "Warning." "One of the things we're trying to determine is what's the right way to bring this information to the driver," said Ron Miller, a technology manager at Ford. Automakers and U.S. government agencies are testing similar devices. The U.S. government has pledged \$1.7 billion over the next six years on intelligent transportation systems. Some crash-avoidance systems are looking at ways of taking control of the car's braking, slowing it automatically or creating "smart" intersections that would alert an approaching car to impending danger. One project, supported by General Motors, the U.S. government and the University of Michigan, is using satellites, radar and electronic sensors.

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### NHTSA Published a Comprehensive Plan for Vehicle Safety Rulemaking Priorities

NHTSA has published a comprehensive plan for vehicle safety rulemaking priorities. NHTSA Vehicle Safety Rulemaking Priorities and Supporting Research : 2003-2006 highlights agency rulemakings that are the highest priority to address the most important vehicle safety needs. "It is time to acknowledge that history is calling us to another important task. It is the battle to stop the deaths and injuries on our roads and highways," according to Norman Y. Mineta, US Secretary of Transportation. **For a copy of the plan, visit the NHTSA website at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/rulings>.**

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### FMCSA Announced Requirements to Improve Safe Operation of Nine- to 15-Passenger Vans and Small Buses

FMCSA announced requirements that will improve the safe operation of commercial nine- to 15-passenger vans and small buses in interstate commerce. "These requirements will help improve safety for occupants of these vehicles, which are known to pose serious safety risks," U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said. "We are committed to doing everything we can to ensure the safety of those who rely on this group of motor carriers that provides important intercity travel services." Under the new rule, FMCSA will apply to all businesses operating commercial motor vehicles (CMV) designed or used to transport between nine and 15 passengers (including the driver) in interstate commerce for "direct compensation" when the vehicle is operated beyond a 75-air-mile radius from the location where the driver normally works. Affected motor carriers must comply with the requirements of this rule by November 10, 2003. **This final rule is available on the Federal Register and is available by searching for docket number FMCSA-2000-7017 at <http://dms.dot.gov>.**

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### With no Statewide Law Regulating Cell Phone Use While Driving, Some New Jersey Towns Have Acted on Their Own



With no statewide law regulating cell phone usage while driving, some New Jersey towns have acted on their own. The result is a patchwork of often contradictory laws that critics and cell phone providers say is creating a minefield for drivers as they cross municipal borders. Compounding the confusion for

some drivers is the inconsistency in the way towns warn motorists of the local laws. For example, while Marlboro's ordinance required signs on every street entering the 30-square-mile borough, Edison has only one electronic sign flashing a message to drivers that hand-held cell phone use is illegal in that town.

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## **NHTSA Wants More Police Assigned to Ticket Non-Seat Belt Wearers**

The federal government wants more police officers assigned to ticket those who don't wear seat belts, bigger fines for seat-belt scofflaws, and limits on the personal-injury damage awards people can seek if they are injured in a car crash while not wearing a belt. States that don't pass tougher, "primary enforcement" laws that enable police to pull over a motorist just because he or she isn't wearing a safety belt could lose a chunk of precious highway money, if NHTSA has its way. **For full 20-page report can be found on the NHTSA website at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/IPTReports.html>.**

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## **Ohio Requires Easier to Read Signs for Older Drivers**

Next month, Ohio state transportation officials will require any new or replacement highway signs to be easier for aging drivers to read. But few others in state government are taking steps to address the needs of the increasing numbers of older drivers and the risks they potentially pose on the road. ODOT's new requirements for signs that take effect Sept. 1 will increase the size of the lettering so signs can be read 200 feet farther away. Earlier this year, the Transportation Department changed highway construction specifications to increase visibility for drivers. A hill or curve must allow a driver at least 492 feet of unobstructed vision while driving 55 mph instead of 450 feet.

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## **Court Overturns Tire Pressure Regulation**

A federal appeals court Wednesday threw out a regulation requiring tire pressure monitors in vehicles as "arbitrary and capricious," opening the way for the adoption of what one lawyer said would be a better monitor. The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals eliminated the federal rule, which would have required monitors that alert drivers to underinflated tires in all vehicles made after November 2003. Three nonprofit consumer advocacy organizations challenged the rule in a lawsuit, saying the government--under pressure from auto companies--adopted a less safe standard than it should have. The appeals court agreed, noting that the system the government required would have failed half the time to warn drivers when tires were underinflated. Another system "would prevent more injuries, save more lives and be more cost-effective," the court said.

# road-wise workforce



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## Save the Date!

### 7th Annual Drive Safely Work Week October 6 -10, 2003

**2003 Theme: Safe Driving is Everyone's Business. Do Your Part.**

This year's campaign spotlights the positive actions that each driver can take to ensure their safety and the safety of others sharing the road as they drive for work or commute to and from work.

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13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

Drive Safely Work Week Campaign Toolkits  
Available June 1st  
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